



Connecticut Driving School Professionals

**AN ACT CONCERNING DRIVER'S SCHOOLS AND ADULT INSTRUCTION
PERMITS. RAISED BILL NUMBER 6494.**

Testimony by James MacPherson:

Good morning. I'm Jim MacPherson and I would like to thank you for allowing me to briefly address this committee on behalf of the Connecticut Driving School Professionals. CDSP is an organization committed to the dignity, growth, development and improvement of the driver education and traffic safety professions. CDSP schools currently train an estimated 60% of new drivers in Connecticut. A list of driving schools in our association is included with our written testimony.

This organization supports bill #6494. This would require adult license applicants to amass at least 10 hours of practice on the road before taking a driving test at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Teens, age 16 and 17, are currently required to amass 40 hours of such practice. Adults have no such requirement.

Supervised behind-the-wheel practice and training are invaluable for safe driving once a license is granted. The need for more practice is supported by accidents statistics that show the first year after gaining a license is the most risky for new drivers.* To allow adult drivers to be able to test and, in many cases, gain a license without a minimal amount of practice beforehand does them no favors, nor does it enhance the safety of their fellow motorists.

The proposed bill, as now written, also would grant a path to a reduction in the waiting period between obtaining a learner's permit and eligibility for adults to test for a license. It would drop from 90 to 45 days if the applicant has completed a training program. In effect, since all applicants must now attend a professionally conducted 8-hour classroom training program, this would make all applicants eligible for the waiting period reduction. The CDSP is suggesting that this waiver only be allowed for adults who have completed in addition to the 8-hour classroom program, 4 hours of professionally administered behind-the-wheel training before testing. We have attached an addendum to this bill that addresses this. This would help assure a higher level of competency and greater safety for the applicant, the public and the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicle employees who must accompany complete strangers in a vehicle with no dual controls on the public streets for testing purposes. As one who has taken these aspiring adult drivers out for training in a vehicle with dual controls, I don't envy their job, nor, I suspect would anyone else here. This proposal and the non-binding incentive to take four hours of professional on-the-road training would be to the benefit of all parties involved.

CDSP also supports raising the cap on the maximum amount that can be charged for attending the 8-hour program dealing with traffic laws, safe driving and the use of drugs and alcohol and their effects on driving. This fee for the 8-hour program has been capped at \$125 for over a decade. During that time costs associated with the program have escalated including lease and maintenance fees as well as instructor salaries. This bill would raise this amount to a still quite reasonable \$150. Keep in mind this is a cap, leaving schools free to charge less if they choose, as some do today.

Sources:

*This true here and in other countries. Consider the UK, where in one new driver in five under the age of 25 crashes during the first year, per DSA, Learning to Drive, a2008 consultation paper. See <http://www.saferroadspartnership.co.uk/what-we-do/safer-driving/young-and-newly-qualified-drivers.html>

Note, too, that younger drivers are expected to have 500 hours of experience before testing for license.

In "YOUNG NOVICE DRIVERS: CARELESS OR CLUELESS?" by James McKnight and . Scott McKnight presented for the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 11710 Beltsville Drive, Suite 100, Calverton, MD

20705-3201, the authors attempted to differentiate the causes for a high number of crashes among beginning younger drivers. It specifically tried to separate issues of immaturity from inexperience. Their findings: "Narrative descriptions of more than 2,000 accidents involving 16 - 19 year old drivers in two states were analyzed for behavioral contributors. The great majority of non-fatal accidents resulted from errors in attention, visual search, speed relative to conditions, hazard recognition, and emergency maneuvers, with high speeds and patently risky behavior accounting for but a small minority." In other words, the majority of crashes were the result of rookie mistakes. The authors also stated that, "...over the first few years, the effects of experience greatly exceed those of age, with reductions [of crashes] of approximately two-thirds in the first 500 miles

of driving. " See: <http://www.drivn101.com/youngnovicedrivers.pdf>

Connecticut Driving School Professionals (CDSP) - Member Schools

AAA Allied Group (West Hartford)
Airway Driving School (Shelton)
Big A Driving School (Middletown)
Fresh Green Light (Cos Cob)
Global Driving School (Windsor)
Lewis School of Driving (New Canaan)

AAA Southern New England (Hamden)
All Star Driver (Watertown)
CC Driver Education (Tolland)
Frank's Driving School (Rocky Hill)
High Ridge Driving School (Stamford)
Santos Driving School (Hartford)

Proposed Amendment to HB 6494

An Act Concerning Drivers' Schools and Adult Instruction Permits

In line 44 after "course" insert "AND AT LEAST FOUR HOURS OF BEHIND-THE-WHEEL, ON-THE ROAD INSTRUCTION WITH A STATE-APPROVED DRIVING SCHOOL."